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THE FIRST YEAR OF THE CONFLICT IN UKRAINE: POLITICAL AND MILITARY CONSEQUENCES FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

ABSTRACT: The outcome of the conflict in Ukraine will bring fundamental political, military, economic, and social consequences define global and regional balance of a power and fate of number of international organizations, including the European Union and NATO. The aim of this paper is to analyze political and military consequences of the first year of the conflict in Ukraine for countries of Central and Eastern Europe, including the Baltic States and the further development of the trans-Atlantic link for European security, including the development of NATO Alliance until 2030. Fundamentally different perceptions of threats in the Russian Federation and in NATO, EU countries, and Ukraine led to the beginning of the Russian Federation's military action against Ukraine in February 24, 2022. Since then, military conflict in Ukraine has evolved into full-scale war on terrain of Ukraine and increasingly negative escalation of political, military, and economic relationships between Russian Federation and NATO, EU and other actors, bringing parties to nuclear standoff. War in Ukraine has brought a substantial political and military endurance test for NATO and the European Union. It is obvious that there are several scenarios of development of war in Ukraine ranging from complete military victory for Ukraine and, subsequently, for the West to complete military victory of the Russian Federation in Ukraine via long-term warfare of attrition.

KEYWORDS: Ukraine, war, NATO, European Union, Central and Eastern Europe

PIERWSZY ROK KONFLIKTU NA UKRAINIE: KONSEKWENCJE POLITYCZNE I WOJSKOWE DLA EUROPY ŚRODKOWO-WSCHODNIEJ

ABSTRAKT: Wynik konfliktu na Ukrainie przyniesie fundamentalne konsekwencje polityczne, militarne, gospodarcze i społeczne, określając globalną i regionalną równowagę sił oraz losy szeregu organizacji międzynarodowych, w tym Unii Europejskiej i NATO. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest analiza politycznych i militarnych konsekwencji pierwszego roku konfliktu na Ukrainie dla krajów Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej, w tym państw bałtyckich oraz dalszego rozwoju więzi transatlantyckiego, w tym rozwoju NATO do 2030 roku. Zasadniczo odmienne postrzeganie zagrożeń w Federacji Rosyjskiej oraz w NATO, krajach UE i w Ukrainie doprowadziło do rozpoczęcia działań wojskowych Federacji Rosyjskiej przeciwko Ukrainie 24 lutego 2022 roku. Od tego czasu konflikt zbrojny w Ukrainie przekształcił się w wojnę i przekłada się na coraz bardziej negatywną eskalację stosunków politycznych, wojskowych i gospodarczych pomiędzy Federacją Rosyjską a NATO, UE i innymi aktorami, doprowadzając strony do nuklearnego impasu. Wojna w Ukrainie jest zatem poważnym sprawdzianem wytrzymałości politycznej i militarnej dla NATO i Unii Europejskiej. Oczywiście jest, że istnieje kilka scenariuszy rozwoju wojny w Ukrainie, począwszy od całkowitego zwycięstwa militarnego Ukrainy, a tym samym Zachodu, po całkowite zwycięstwo militarne Federacji Rosyjskiej w konsekwencji długotrwałej wojny na wyniszczenie.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE: Ukraina, wojna, NATO, Unia Europejska, Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to analyze the political and military consequences of the first year of war in Ukraine for Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic States. Furthermore, the aim of this paper is to analyze risks and challenges for the political and military support in Ukraine, and changes of global and regional balance of power, including development of the transatlantic link and the NATO Alliance until 2030. The hypothesis of the paper is the following: the first year of the conflict in Ukraine has fundamentally increased security threats and challenges for Central and Eastern European countries and has consolidated the institutional and normative coherence of the NATO alliance.

By invading Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin has made the clash of competing visions a brutal and deadly reality¹. Additionally, in a border geopolitical sense, the war in Ukraine marks the return of contestation over spheres of influence in world politics². Therefore, it is obvious that the outcome of the military conflict in Ukraine will have fundamental political, military, economic, and social consequences for the future development of NATO and the European Union, the United States, Russia, and other global and regional actors. One would argue that the consequences of this conflict could be well comparable with major political, military, economic, and societal changes in the past. Establishment of a Westphalian system of nation states (1648) after the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Vienna Congress (1815) after the Great French Revolution (1789), Napoleonic Wars (1793-1815), and establishment of the Concert of Great Powers, Versailles system after World War I (1914-1918), Yalta-Potsdam system after World War, II (1939-1945), Cold War and creation of a bipolar global security system with two superpowers-Soviet Union and The United States- as main political, ideological and military rivals. The Paris Charter (1990), the end of the Cold War, and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 had established a unipolar global security environment dominated by the United States.

However, the increasingly complex and complicated security environment of the beginning of the 21st century has created conditions for further global and regional instability, failing and failed states, permanent increase of global and regional conflicts such as-Syria, Libya, Nagorno-Karabakh, Ukraine, and Afghanistan-had been pivotal for further global and regional instability. Moreover, the political, security, and economic interests of the United States, their NATO Allies, and Russian Federation have been fundamentally different, as the perception of mutual threats. The Russian Federation and the People's Republic of China have been increasingly challenging the global and regional security order led by the United States, and it is highly likely that war in Ukraine will accelerate and finalize the transition from a unipolar, United States led global security order, to a multipolar global security order in which China, India, the Russian Federation and other actors will play a prominent role. One would suggest that post-

¹ Munich Security Conference Report 2023, Munich Security Conference, www.securityconference.org (27.02.2023).

² E. Ashford, *The Persistence of Great-Power Politics. What the War in Ukraine Has Revealed About Geopolitical Rivalry*, "Foreign Affairs" 2023, February 20, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/persistence-great-power-politics> (20.02.2023).

war security environment will be challenging for international and regional organizations, such as United Nations, OSCE, EU, NATO, and others. Taking into account that most of these organizations had been established during the Cold War or immediately after the Cold War within different global security environment, and tasks and objectives suited for this particular period-it will be increasingly challenging for these organizations to remain effective and efficient after the war in Ukraine will end.

Taking into account that most of Central and Eastern European countries are small in terms of size of territory, size of population, size and capabilities of national armed forces, a negative outcome of Ukrainian war could pose direct and existential threat for their very existence and development. It fully applies to the Baltic States. Therefore, national security threats stemming from conflict in Ukraine will target small states, because small states are heavily dependent for their own security and defense arrangements on a politically powerful and militarily capable global actor or upon a security and defense organization where such an actor plays a prominent role³. In this light, the key issue to determine whether or not state is small, it is necessary to address key security and defense issues and take into account the fact that external factors shape a small state security mentality⁴. Taking also into account that military power has returned as the key element of a state's foreign and security policy (Nagorno-Karabakh 2020, Ukraine 2022-2023) at the beginning of the 21st century, it is obvious that the debellicated societies of Europe⁵ increased the resources allocated to state defense, thus strengthening NATO and the European Union.

The war in Ukraine has also triggered other security challenges, such as for Central and Eastern European countries such as increasing the possibility of yet another conventional military conflict in Europe, possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in Ukraine, terrorism, organized crime networks, illegal migration, cyber threats, CBRN threats, conventional arms control, (CAC), nuclear arms control and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction

POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AFTER THE FIRST YEAR OF CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

One has to admit that the possibility of a military conflict in Ukraine has been outlined in several statements by scholars and politicians well before the actual beginning of the conflict. The famous quote of Zbigniew Brzezinski: "It cannot be stressed enough that without Ukraine, Russia ceases to be an empire, but with Ukraine suborned and then subordinated, Russia automatically becomes an empire" outlines the importance of Ukraine in Russian foreign and security policy⁶. Other experts also described the possibility of a full-scale military conflict in

³ R. Rublovskis, M. Seselgyte, *Defence and Security for the Small*, Reykjavik 2013, pp. 12-25.

⁴ R. Vayryanen, *Small States: Persisting Despite Doubts. The National Security of Small States in the Changing World*, London 1997, p. 98.

⁵ S.C. Gray, *Another Bloody Century. Future Warfare*, London 2005, p. 95.

⁶ Z. Brzezinski, www.goodreads.com/quotes (30.01.2023).

Ukraine as plausible already in 2005. “Russia versus Ukraine would not be intended as war, but rather as a vital step in the restoration of the Russian Empire. It would answer to Russian fear that Ukraine might join an aggressive new European super-state. It would restore the Russian honor lost in its rejection by Ukraine in 1991. It would serve Russia’s geopolitical interest by both – protecting its southern flank in Europe and restoring direct access to the Black Sea and hence the Balkans. Should Ukraine succeed in its expressed desire to join NATO, the conflict between Moscow and Kiev would have the potential trigger for a very wide war indeed”⁷. Taking into account the statements mentioned above on the political and military objectives of the Russian Federation and the Ukrainian political movement of Ukraine to join the European Union and the NATO, and the strategic objective of the Russian Federation to keep Ukraine out of both organizations, describes the fundamental security concerns of the Russian Federation already outlined in George Kennan’s “Long Telegram”⁸. As 2021 came to an end, the Russian Federation presented the United States with the list of demands it said were necessary to stave off the possibility of large-scale military conflict in Ukraine. In a draft treaty delivered to a US diplomat in Moscow, the Russian government asked for a formal halt to NATO’s eastern enlargement, a permanent freeze on further expansion of the Alliance’s military infrastructure, military bases and weapons systems, in the former Soviet territory, and the end of Western military assistance to Ukraine⁹. The United States and NATO rejected the Russian proposal, which ultimately led to the outbreak of conflict in Ukraine. However, the current military conflict in Ukraine has slowly evolved and escalated since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, and it was obvious that the conflict itself was much more than Ukraine and its possible NATO membership. It is about the future of the European order crafted after the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the 1990s, the United States and its allies designed a Euro-Atlantic security architecture in which Russia had no clear commitment or stake, and since Russian President Vladimir Putin has come to power, Russia has been challenging that system¹⁰.

Taking into account previously mentioned statements; it is obvious that conflict in Ukraine has become fundamental test for the unity and coherence for European Union, NATO and internal political coherence for the United States and other member states of the EU and NATO. Attempts to find a diplomatic solution that would lead to a compromise between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the second part of 2021 and the beginning of 2022 have failed on February 24¹¹. The beginning of the Russian military operation brought a fundamental dilemma for the decision-making process for European Union and NATO on strategic issues of

⁷ S.C. Gray, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

⁸ G. Kennan, *The Long Telegram*, www.nsarchive2.gwu.edu/coldwar/documents (13.02.2023).

⁹ D. Trenin, *What Putin Really Wants in Ukraine? Russia Seeks to Stop NATO Expansion Not to Annex More Territory* “Foreign Affairs” 2021, December 28, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2021-12-28/what-putin-really-wants-ukraine> (6.02.2023).

¹⁰ A. Stent, *The Putin Doctrine. A Move on Ukraine Has Always Been Part of the Plan*, “Foreign Affairs” 2022, January 27, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-01-27/putin-doctrine> (10.02.2023).

¹¹ C. Belin, *The Perils of Macron’s Shuttle Diplomacy*, “Foreign Affairs” 2022, February 10, www.foreignaffairs.com (10.02.2023).

enlargement of both organizations, development of new strategies towards Russian Federation and Ukraine, sustainment of Open Door Policy for accession of new member states into both organizations, decisions of enhanced political, economic, financial and military support of Ukraine. Even before the outbreak of the conflict on February 24, 2022, there were fundamentally different opinions on how to deal with the upcoming military engagement. However, even before the beginning, there was a clear understanding that it will be the largest military offensive in Europe since World War II and that the conflict in Ukraine would be a catastrophe for global and regional security architecture¹². There was a point of view that NATO doors have to be kept open and that Washington should not grant President Putin sphere of influence what he wants¹³. On the contrary, there had been proposals how to break the cycle of conflict with Russia by seeking pragmatic consensus¹⁴, how to make a deal with Vladimir Putin with comprehensive pact in order to avoid war¹⁵, and even further point of view which challenged the prevailing wisdom of the West that the Ukraine crisis can be blamed almost entirely on Russian aggression claiming that this account is wrong: the United States and its European Allies share most of the responsibility of the crisis¹⁶. One can argue that just before the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine and the early stages of the conflict, there were fundamentally different points of view on how to respond to the crisis and what decisions should be taken towards the Russian Federation and Ukraine. From the very beginning, such an environment increased difficulty in taking comprehensive and timely political decisions; however, there was an understanding that the political, economic, and military approach to the conflict in Ukraine has to consolidate quickly. On the one hand, politicians and experts outlined different possible scenarios for the outcome of the Ukraine conflict ranging from analysis of the Russian military victory and subsequent political transformation of Europe, and Ukrainian military victory with subsequent end of the current political regime, transformation and possible disintegration of the Russian Federation, and establishment of number of new political entities¹⁷.

¹² A. Vindman, D.C. Bustillos, *The Day after Russia Attacks*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, January 21, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-01-21/day-after-russia-attacks> (10.02.2023).

¹³ E. Edelman, D. Kramer, *Keep NATO's Door Open for Ukraine*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, January 31, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-01-31/keep-natos-door-open-ukraine> (10.02.2023).

¹⁴ S. Charap, *How to Break the Cycle of Conflict with Russia. Seeking Consensus Isn't Appeasement-Its Pragmatism*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, February 7, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2022-02-07/how-break-cycle-conflict-russia> (13.2.2023).

¹⁵ M. McFaul, *How to Make Deal with Putin. Only Comprehensive Pact Can Avoid War*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, February 11, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/europe/2022-02-11/how-make-deal-putin> (30.01.2023).

¹⁶ J. Mearsheimer, *Why the Ukraine Crisis is the West's Fault. The Liberal Delusions That Provoked Putin*, "Foreign Affairs" 2014, August 18, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russia-fsu/2014-08-18/why-ukraine-crisis-west-s-fault>. (30.1.2023).

¹⁷ L. Fix, M. Kimmage, *What if Russia Wins? Kremlin Controlled Ukraine Would Transform Europe*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, February 18, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-02-18/what-if-russia-wins> (10.02.2023); A. Kendal-Taylor, E. Frantz, *Look The Beginning of the End for Putin? Dictatorships Stable until They Aren't*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, March 2, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/russian-federation/2022-03-02/beginning-end-putin> (10.02.2023); L. Fix, M. Kimmage, *What if Russia Loses the War. A Defeat for Moscow Won't Be a Clear Victory for the West?*, "Foreign Affairs" 2022, March 4, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/what-if-russia-loses> (10.02.2023).

Taking into account the spectrum of opinions before the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine and, subsequently, the variety of points of view concerning the decision-making process on support of Ukraine and further containment of the Russian Federation, one would argue that fundamentally important political and military consequences after the first year of the conflict in Ukraine are the following: creation of the NATO 2030 Agenda, Declaration of the NATO Madrid Summit in June 2022, and approval of new NATO Strategic Concept (NSC). Central and Eastern European countries have been the main supporters and driving forces behind these documents and decisions taken at the NATO Madrid Summit due to their understanding of radical changes in the security environment in Europe after February 24, 2022. These documents and decisions have established a consolidated approach to the conflict in Ukraine. Even before the beginning of the conflict on February 24, 2022, NATO approved the NATO 2030 Agenda at the Summit of the Alliance in Brussels on June 14, 2021. The NATO 2030 Agenda is an ambitious project established to ensure that NATO will remain ready, strong and united for a new era of increased global competition with China, Russian Federation, and other emerging regional powers¹⁸. The Agenda outlined fundamental strategic proposals to fulfill the mission statement mentioned above—deeper political consultations and coordination between member states of the Alliance, strengthened deterrence and defense to bolster the Allied deterrence and defense capabilities, including the commitment to spend 2% of GDP on defense needs, improved resilience, preserve NATO’s technological edge, uphold international order based on rules, maintain open-door policy to countries that aspire to NATO membership, improve training and capacity building, further investment in the Alliance to deliver NATO 2030 objectives¹⁹.

The official statement of the NATO Madrid Summit 2022 fully outlined the common understanding of NATO Allies that NATO “faces a critical time for security and international peace and stability as war has returned to the European continent”²⁰. Under such a fundamental and radical change of global and regional security environment, the Summit adopted important political and military decisions based on the consequences of the military conflict in Ukraine. Firstly, the Summit has endorsed a new NATO Strategic Concept (NSC) which was long overdue of the previous NSC adopted under totally different global and regional security environment and security challenges. One of the fundamental political differences between NSC 2010 and NSC 2022 was an assessment of the new global security environment and the status of the Russian Federation and China within the current security environment. In NSC 2010, which was adopted at the NATO Lisbon Summit in 2010, China is not mentioned, while the relationships between NATO and the Russian Federation are described as “NATO-Russia cooperation is of strategic importance as it contributes to creating a common space of peace, stability, and security. NATO poses no threat to Russia. On the contrary: we want to see a true strategic

¹⁸ *Agenda NATO 2030*, www.nato.int/nato2030, 2021 (23.01.2023).

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ *NATO Madrid Summit Declaration*, www.nato.int/cps 2022 (10.02.2023).

partnership between NATO and Russia, and we will act accordingly, with the expectation of reciprocity from Russia, enhance the political consultations and practical cooperation with Russia in areas of shared interest” (NATO Strategic Concept 2010²¹. On the contrary, NSC 2022 states that “The Russian Federation is the most significant and direct threat to Allies’ security and to peace in and stability in Euro-Atlantic area”²², and understanding that competition and security challenge stems also from “People’s Republic of China, who challenge NATO’s interests, security, and values and seek to undermine rules-based international order”²³.

Secondly, one has to admit that yet another fundamental consequence of the conflict in Ukraine is the further enhancement of NATO’s Open Doors Policy and the enlargement of the Alliance. This decision is especially very important for countries in Central and Eastern Europe, including the Baltic States. The decision of the Alliance to invite Finland and Sweden to join NATO Alliance is a monumental shift for these two nations, as well as a fundamental change for the security of the Baltic Sea Region. Taking into account that both countries were neutral and without any political participation within the military alliance, this political shift is tremendous. It is important to emphasize that the previous neutrality policy stemmed from its military defeats in the 18th and 19th centuries, the Great Northern War (1700-1721), and the subsequent war against the Russian Empire (1808-1809), when Sweden lost Finland’s territory to the Russian Empire. After these events, Sweden has fundamentally changed its foreign and security policy. On the other hand, Finland after the outcome of World War II also developed a neutral foreign and security policy. Therefore, the decision of NATO to invite both countries to the Alliance, marks a fundamental change in the foreign and security policy of both Finland and Sweden, as well and enhancement of NATO’s Open Doors Policy.

Thirdly, the major consequence of the conflict in Ukraine is a substantial increase in financial and other resources allocated to state defense. Since 2014, there has been considerable progress on Allied defense spending²⁴. Previous agreements put 2% of GDP as a threshold of defense spending for members states of the Alliance. Central and Eastern members of the Alliance increased their defense spending well above 2% benchmark since 2014, targeting 3% and more in 2024-2027 timeframe.

One would conclude that the most important political and military consequences after the first year of war in Ukraine are the following: NATO’s decisions to significantly strengthen deterrence and defense posture to deny any potential adversary any possible opportunities for aggression (NATO Strategic Concept 2022. www.nato.int/nato-strategic-concept 2022)²⁵, understanding of the current security environment and radical change of policy towards Russian Federation and China, NATO decisions in order to enhance NATO Open Doors Policy and subsequent invitation of Finland and Sweden to join the Alliance, thus launching another round

²¹ *NATO Strategic Concept 2010*, www.nato.int/strategic-concept-2010 (10.02.2023).

²² *NATO Strategic Concept 2022*, www.nato.int/strategic-concept-2022 (10.02.2023).

²³ *NATO Madrid Summit Declaration*.

²⁴ *Ibidem*.

²⁵ *NATO Strategic Concept 2022*.

of NATO Enlargement, and finally, understanding of the Allies to significantly increase resources allocated for state defense. One would also emphasize that Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic States, have played a very important political role to shape the NATO Madrid Summit Declaration and the NATO Strategic Concept (NSC) 2022, not only directly as member states of the Alliance but through regional arrangements- Lublin Triangle and Bucharest Nine. Therefore, one can conclude that the political decisions taken at the Summit are fundamental to the security and defense of the eastern flank of the Alliance.

MILITARY CONSEQUENCES FOR CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AFTER THE FIRST YEAR OF CONFLICT IN UKRAINE

Taking into account the fundamental political consequences of the Ukraine conflict and the fundamental political decisions taken by NATO and European Union, there are also subsequent fundamental military decisions which stem from previously mentioned political decisions. There are several approaches to military decisions. First, the establishment of a multinational decision-making format for military support of Ukraine with the subsequent delivery of military capabilities to Ukraine. Secondly, overall improvement of command and control, force structure, deployment and combat readiness of NATO military forces and, thirdly- strengthening and reinforcement of NATO's Eastern flank which includes Central and Eastern European countries and the Baltic States.

After the beginning of the conflict in Ukraine, it was obvious that NATO and European Union has to design a decision-making platform and a format for the military support of Ukraine. As a result, the Ramstein Format was established at Ramstein Air Base by the United States with the first meeting on April 26, 2022. The purpose of the establishment of Ramstein Format is to discuss and coordinate the scope and parameters of military support for Ukraine. This format has become a standing framework with already 8 meetings held- the last one held in January 20, 2023. More than 40 countries are members of the Format, predominantly- member states of NATO and European Union, however- there are also countries of Africa (Tunisia, Morocco) and Asia (Japan, South Korea). The military results of these meetings have resulted in a gradual increase in the scope and quality of the weapon systems and military capabilities of the Ukrainian military artillery systems, howitzers, long-range missiles, main battle tanks, intelligence data, and other military capabilities. Discussion about the provision of fighter jets to Ukraine is on the table between Ukraine and NATO members.

Another military consequence of the first year of conflict in Ukraine is decision of the NATO Madrid Summit to improve command and control arrangements, establishing division-level structures which mean the development of a new force model and the NATO Force Structure (Madrid Summit Declaration).²⁶ The development of the new force model includes the decision to increase of NATO High Readiness Forces. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg

²⁶ *Madrid Summit Declaration.*

announced after the Summit that NATO will increase the number of troops on high alert by more than sevenfold to over 300,000²⁷. The above-mentioned decisions on strengthening and substantial reinforcement of the Eastern flank are direct military consequence for Central and Eastern European countries, including the Baltic States. NATO Allies have committed to deploy robust in-place combat ready forces on the Alliance's east flank- from previously existing battlegroups to brigade-size units with credible rapidly available reinforcements on short notice²⁸. Moreover, establishment and development of prepositioning of military equipment and stocks in the Eastern flank, new generation of design of military plans, especially for Central and Eastern European countries and the Baltic States, increase of number of military exercises for high intensity and multi-domain operations. The military consequences for Central and Eastern European countries after the first year of war in Ukraine have been significantly shaped by these countries, and as a result, the eastern flank of NATO has been significantly reinforced in order to be ready for any hypothetical military attack from beyond NATO borders.

CHALLENGES FOR FURTHER POLITICAL AND MILITARY SUPPORT OF UKRAINE

The first year of the conflict in Ukraine not only consolidated decision-making process within NATO and the European Union concerning political, military, economic and financial support for Ukraine, economic sanctions policy towards the Russian Federation, increase of defense spending in NATO members, further development of military plans and military capabilities, but also outlined potential political risks and challenges within NATO and EU countries for continuous support of Ukraine in the 2023-2024 timeframe. The year of war in Ukraine has caused a fundamental blow to the global and regional security environment of the beginning of the 21st century. The parties of the conflict have no intention to negotiate a cease-fire or a peace settlement, and only full military defeat on the ground and subsequent political capitulation by one of the parties could lead to the end of hostilities. This outcome would have fundamental and strategic consequences. NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg plainly described that "Russia's victory in Ukraine will be a defeat for NATO"²⁹. Taking into account currently non-negotiable political and security environment in Ukraine, Russian Federation, the United States, NATO, and European Union-there are several plausible scenarios which would lead to above-mentioned results. The political and security demands of the Russian Federation regarding Ukraine remain the same as before the outbreak of hostilities on February 24, 2022. Ukraine should not be accessed into NATO and the European Union, Ukraine should remain neutral, demilitarized, and change the internal political framework. On contrary, Zelenskiy's 10-point peace plan is currently fully unacceptable for Russia. Among other points, it calls for the full withdrawal

²⁷ J. Stoltenberg, Reuters 2022. www.reuters.com/world/Europe (10.02.2023).

²⁸ *Madrid Summit Declaration*.

²⁹ J. Stoltenberg, *Ukraine Business News* 2022. www.ubu.news (10.02.2023).

of all Russian military forces from Ukraine's territory, the restoration of Ukrainian sovereignty over all territory within the internationally recognized borders of 1991, including Donbass and Crimea, reparations for Russia to rebuild Ukraine's infrastructure, the establishment of a special tribunal in order to prosecute Russian war crimes, the prevention of escalation of conflict and building security architecture in the Euro-Atlantic space, including guaranties for Ukraine³⁰.

If Russian Federation will be able to achieve its political objectives by military means and physically occupy all or most of the territory of Ukraine, that will lead to increasing global conflict between Russian Federation and the United States, and subsequent fundamental security crisis for European Union³¹. One would argue that there will be fundamental political, reputational, security, and economic consequences for internal coherence and stability not only for the European Union but also for NATO and the United States³². On the contrary, if military forces of the Russian Federation are defeated in Ukraine, it could still trigger negative consequences for the West, including extreme scenarios of internal chaos, civil war, and disintegration of the Russian Federation with the possible problems with Russia's nuclear arsenal³³. Russian military defeat in Ukraine will also result in full withdrawal of Russian military forces from territory of Ukraine resulting in an internal political crisis in the Russian Federation with further collapse of the Federation and transfer of political power to regional elites. Moreover, such an outcome of the conflict could result in Ukraine's claims to a part of the Russian Federation and subsequent political leadership in post-Soviet space. Globally, it will mean further strengthening of the dominance of the United States and its allies³⁴. An even more extreme scenario calls for abolishment of Russian security services, a fundamental reduction of Russian armed forces and nuclear capabilities, and transfer of political power from Moscow to regions of the Russian Federation³⁵. The scenarios mentioned above outline an extreme outcome of the conflict with total military defeat of either Russia or Ukraine. It is highly likely that none of these extreme scenarios will happen. There are also numbers of scenarios in between of two extremes, which are likely to occur, however, both sides of the conflict are determined to end the conflict only on their political and military terms.

Against the background mentioned previously and possible scenarios of development of the conflict, one would argue that political and military risks and challenges could significantly diminish further political, economic and military support for Ukraine from the NATO and EU side. The range of political and economic risks could include several domains – the backlash of imposed economic sanctions to economics and societies of NATO and EU member states resulting in internal political pressure for governments and parliaments to change support policy

³⁰ *Explainer: What is Zelensky 10-Point Peace Plan*, Reuters. Reuters. December 28, 2022. <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/what-is-zelenskiys-10-point-peace-plan-2022-12-28/> (16.02.2023).

³¹ Ukrainian Institute of Politics, *Seven Scenarios for Ukraine. From Triumph to Decline*, Kyiv 2022.

³² L. Fix, M. Kimmage, *What if Russia Win...* (10.02.2023).

³³ L. Fix, M. Kimmage, *What if Russia Loses...*(10.02.2023).

³⁴ Ukrainian Institute of Politics.

³⁵ M. Khodorkovsky, G. Kasparov, *Don't Fear Putin's Demise. Victory for Ukraine. Democracy for Russia*, "Foreign Affairs" 2023, January 20, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/ukraine/dont-fear-putins-demise> (16.02.2023).

for Ukraine. Probably, one of the examples of such link between economic impact on society and political response of the society is elections of House of Representatives in the United States in November 2022. This result brought a gradual change in political discourse in the House concerning further support of Ukraine, outlined the need for increased political control over financial transfers to Ukraine and other actions by Republican members of the House. The next presidential election in the United States in 2024 will bring further complications to the political, financial, and military support for Ukraine. It is obvious that the political discourse on the Ukraine case will be one of the most important political issues in the presidential debate before the elections. One can conclude that, if economic challenges mount further in 2023-2024 timeframe, societies would respond politically via election process to change political course in countries of NATO and European Union for support of Ukraine. Under such circumstances, Ukraine could be forced by the political establishment of NATO and EU countries to negotiate a ceasefire or peace agreement with the Russian Federation³⁶.

Yet another political challenge could affect the political unity and cohesion of NATO for Open Door Policy and enlargement of the Alliance, and the political cohesion of European Union on development of further packages of sanctions towards Russian Federation. Despite previously mentioned efforts of the Alliance to consolidate political and military support of Ukraine, invitation of Finland and Sweden to join NATO- there are several members of the Alliance which have reservations concerning support of Ukraine and accession of Finland and Sweden. Hungary and Turkey have their own political and security considerations on these issues; however, disagreements between Hungary and Turkey, on the one hand, and NATO and the European Union, on the other, can lead to mounting difficulties to maintain internal political cohesion and effective decision-making process within NATO and the European Union. The first year of the conflict has also shown that the vast majority of states have maintained political, economic, and trade relations with the Russian Federation and have avoided participating in the imposing sanctions on Russia. Some countries, such as Iran, are directly involved in the military support of the Russian Federation. Some major regional actors are calling for the creation of yet another political format in order to negotiate lasting peace in Ukraine. The President of Brazil, Lula Da Silva, has proposed creating a format by group of countries with the objective of discussing ways to end the war in Ukraine. As the President outlined: “What we have to do is form a group strong enough to be respected at a negotiating table”. Countries that could participate in the proposed format- China, India, Indonesia, and others (Lula suggests a group of nations to negotiate peace for Ukraine, Russia³⁷). Therefore, the political challenge for Ukraine to achieve its political and military goals would be seen as mounting pressure of a growing number of influential non-NATO and non-EU nations, which will express their commitment to achieve peace negotiations between the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

³⁶ L. Fix, M. Kimmage, *What if Putin Makes a Deal?*, “Foreign Affairs” 2022, March 23, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/ukraine/2022-03-23/what-if-russia-makes-deal> (10.02.2023).

³⁷ L. Da Silva, Agencia Brazil 2023, www.agenciabrasilebc.com.br (16.02.2023).

One can conclude that the range of political and military challenges in 2023 can hamper Ukraine's political and military objectives in the conflict, as well as deny the achievement of the political and military objectives of NATO and the European Union. Finally, one has to admit that the conflict still have potential for escalation, coming close to use of nuclear weapons, and spill over into other neighboring states-particularly into Moldova (Transnistria) and Belarus.

CONCLUSIONS

The outbreak of military conflict on 24 February 2022 in Ukraine has brought an unprecedented scale of human casualties and destruction of civilian and military infrastructure, unlike those seen from World War II. It is obvious that there will be fundamental political, economic, geopolitical, institutional, and ideological changes after the end of the conflict in Ukraine. Highly likely, the end of the conflict will determine the global strategic transformation from unipolar global security architecture, led by the United States, to multipolar global security architecture with China, Russian Federation, India, Brazil, and other actors to play significant role in security architecture of the 21st century.

One can draw certain political and military conclusions after the first year of the Ukrainian conflict. The United States, NATO, and the European Union have engaged in fundamental and long-lasting opposition against the Russian Federation and the support of Ukraine. Without the political, economic, financial, and military support of the West, Ukraine would not be able to endure 2022 and, most likely, it would be militarily defeated and face economic collapse. NATO and the European Union have shown a reasonable level of unity and coherence in the domains of support for Ukraine, sanctions policy towards the Russian Federation, NATO's Open Door Policy and enlargement, substantial increase in defense spending, strengthening the eastern flank of the Alliance, however, several member states of NATO and EU have different opinions on the decisions mentioned decisions, especially Turkey and Hungary. Moreover, sanction policy of European Union versus Russian Federation has also brought considerable economic backlash to its member states; therefore, economic issues have also brought political changes in several member states of NATO and European Union, and economic challenges will bring political changes in 2023. In 2022 NATO has been able to substantially increase military support for Ukraine, however, in 2023 level of support could decrease due to challenges for countries of Ramstein Format to sustain production level of military hardware in numbers which would comply with increasing needs of Ukraine. If NATO and Ramstein Format will not be able to sustain Ukraine with sufficient amount of artillery rocket systems, infantry fighting vehicles, tanks and other military capabilities, Ukraine could suffer military defeat in 2023.

China, Brazil, and other important regional actors are increasingly involved in the establishment of a global political format to set the stage for a possible diplomatic resolution of the military conflict between the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Taking into account the increasing political, economic, and military influence of these countries, it is obvious that

parties of the conflict will have to take into account the point of view of the above-mentioned global political format.

Finally, due to the fact that the conflict is still escalating, one would argue that danger of potential spill over of the conflict and involvement of Belarus and Moldova cannot be excluded. This scenario would be extremely dangerous for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Different opinions of member states of NATO and EU can potentially lead to a decrease in the political, economic, financial, and military support of Ukraine and, subsequently, to a decrease in the political unity and coherence within NATO and EU. Therefore, the political cohesion and unity of the NATO and European Union will remain fundamental cornerstones for the security and defense of Central and Eastern European states. The hypothesis of the paper has been verified- the first year of the conflict in Ukraine has fundamentally increased security threats and challenges for Central and Eastern European countries and, subsequently, it has significantly contributed to enhanced institutional and normative coherence of NATO Alliance.

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